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Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 01329 280932Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 1329

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, KS
SUBJECT: KOREAN DOMESTIC POLITICS

SUMMARY: DURING FEB 28 MEETING WITH ME PRIMIN KIM CHONG-PIL OUTLINED PLANS OF ROKG TO MAINTAIN CURRENT MORE CONCILIATORY DOMESTIC POLITICAL POLICIES AND TO DEAL WITH OPPOSITION ON BASIS OF PATIENCE AND MODERATION. END SUMMARY.

1. KIM CHONG P'IL SAID THAT BASIC POLICY OF ROKG WILL BE TO EXERCISE PATIENCE AND MODERATION IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL ARENA AND SEEK WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH MODERATE OPPOSITION, WHILE ISOLATING MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS. HE OUTLINED SERIES OF SPECIFIC STEPS PROJECTED IN THE COMING PERIOD.

2. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: PRIMIN SAID THAT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WOULD BE CONVENED IN MARCH, PROVIDING OUTLET FOR OPPOSITION TO EXPRESS IT CRITICISM. TOUGH DEBATE IN ASSEMBLY IS ANTICIPATED. WHILE NEGOTIATIONS WITH OPPOSITION ON SPECIAL ASSEMBLY SESSION ARE STILL IN PROGRESS, OPPOSITION IS BEGINNING TO WITHDRAW FROM ITS MORE ADAMANT DEMANDS. SOME CONCESSIONS WILL BE MADE TO SAVE OPPOSITION'S FACE BUT GOVERNMENT DOES NOT PRESENTLY PLAN TO AGREE TO SET UP SPECIAL COMMITTEES, AS DEMANDED BY OPPOSITION, ON CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION, ELECTION VIOLATIONS, AND ALLEGED TORTURE OF PRISONERS.

3. ELECTION VIOLATIONS: PRIMIN MENTIONED THAT HE HAD ORDERED PROCURATOR GENERAL TODAY (FEB 28) TO PROSECUTE QUICKLY ALL
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CASES INVOLVING ELECTION VIOLATIONS. HE RECOGNIZED THAT THERE

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HAD BEEN A FEW CASES OF BALLOT STUFFING, BUT SAID THAT THESE WOULD BE DEALT WITH IN THE COURTS.

4. RELEASE OF EMERGENCY DECREE PRISONERS: PRIMIN COMMENTED THAT HE HAD PERSONALLY EXPECTED PUBLIC OUTCRY BY RELEASED PRISONERS AND FELT THAT, AFTER INITIAL OUTBURST, COMMOTION HAD ALREADY BEGUN TO DIE DOWN. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT PRESIDENT PARK HAD BEEN "PERTURBED" BY THIS INITIAL OUTBURST, BUT NOW ACCEPTS IT AS INEVITABLE. IN THIS CONNECTION, PRIMIN MENTIONED THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD TURNED ON HIM FOR HAVING URGED RELEASE, BUT THEN HAD "SMILED" WHEN PRIMIN POINTED OUT THAT STUDENTS CAN BE INCLUENCED TO MODERATE THEIR COMPLAINTS.

5. AS NEXT STEP 60 PERCENT OF THE STUDENTS WILL VERY SHORTLY BE PARDONED AND PERMITTED TO RETURN TO UNIVERSITIES, SINCE THEY HAD INDICATED "REPENTANCE." THE REMAINING 40 PERCENT OF THE PRISONERS WILL BE KEPT UNDER OBSERVATION AND PARDONED AS THEIR BEHAVIOR MODERATES.

6. TONGA-ILBO: PRIMIN COMMENTED THAT WHILE TONGA-ILBO HAD GONE TOO FAR IN THE GOVERNMENT'S JUDGMENT, NO ACTION HAD BEEN TAKEN TO SUPRESS PUBLICATION. NOW, TONGA-ILBO REALIZES THE LIMITS OF ITS INFLUENCE AND IS PREPARED AT ITS OWN INITIATIVE TO MODERATE ITS POLICIES. PRIMIN SAID PUBLISHER KIM SANG-MAN HAS DEVELOPED HIS OWN PLAN FOR REFORMING THE PAPER, WHICH WILL BEGIN TO UNFOLD IMMEDIATELY. PRIMIN EXPECTS THE REFORM TO BE COMPLETED BY MID-MARCH AND THE PAPER TO ADOPT A MORE NEUTRAL POLICY RATHER THAN BEING EXCLUSIVELY CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT. HE EXPRESSED PARTICULAR PLEASURE THAT INITIATIVE FOR THIS REFORM HAD COME FROM TONGA-ILBO MANAGEMENT. RESULT WILL BE RETURN OF ADVERTISING.

7. OTHER POLITICAL MOVEMENTS: PRIMIN DENIED SPECIFICALLY NEW YORK TIMES REPORT ON SUPREME COUNCIL, AND ANY IMMEDIATE PLANS FOR CABINET RESHUFFLE INVOLVING OPPOSITON LEADERS. HE ADDED THAT "PAN-NATIONALISM" DID NOT CONTEMPLATE SPECIFIC CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE AS RUMORED BUT WAS RATHER EXPRESSSION OF DESIRABILITY BRINGING WHOLE NATION TOGETHER IN SUPPORT OF NATIONAL OBJECTIVES FOLLOWING REFERENDUM.
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